DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 034 IR 058 606

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Hartzell, Gary |
| TITLE | Why Should Principals Support School Libraries? ERIC Digest. |
| INSTITUTION | ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology, Syracuse, NY. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. |
| REPORT NO | EDO-IR-2002-06 |
| PUB DATE | 2002-11-00 |
| NOTE | 4p. |
| CONTRACT | ED-99-CO-0005 |
| AVAILABLE FROM | ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology, Syracuse University, 621 Skytop Rd., Suite 160, Syracuse, NY 13244-5290. Tel: 315-443-3640; Tel: 800-464-9107 (Toll Free); Fax: 315-443-5448; e-mail: eric@ericit.org. For full text: http://ericit.org. |
| PUB TYPE | ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073) |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Academic Achievement; Administrator Effectiveness; Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Administrators; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; Library Development; *Principals; Program Development; *School Libraries |
| IDENTIFIERS | ERIC Digests |

ABSTRACT

Principals should support school libraries because it is in both their students' and their own best interest to do so. Quality library media programs can enhance student achievement, and informed, committed librarians can help principals enhance their own administrative practice. This ERIC Digest discusses improving student achievement, including research identifying positive correlations between student achievement and library media services and 11 media services program characteristics; administrator support; and how principals can support libraries. The Digest concludes by stating that principals interested in developing their libraries as instruments of school improvement can ask their librarians to assemble a research collection to share with board members, district administration, and faculty. (Contains 27 references.) (AEF)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 470 034

# Why Should Principals Support School Libraries? ERIC Digest

By. Gary Hartzell

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

IR058606



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC Digest

November 2002

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology at Syracuse University
621 Skytop Road, Suite 160
Syracuse, New York 13244
www.ericit.org
EDO-IR-2002-06

# Why Should Principals Support School Libraries?

By Gary Hartzell

Principals should support school libraries because it is in both their students' and their own best interests to do so. Quality library media programs can enhance student achievement, and informed, committed librarians can help principals enhance their own administrative practice.

## Student Achievement

Improving student achievement is a vital principal interest, but many principals overlook libraries and librarians as potentially powerful instruments in that work because they have not been educated to the library's value and library media research rarely appears in administrator publications (Wilson & Blake, 1993). Consequently, principals often leave library potential untapped despite fifty years of research evidence that effective library media programs—when led by active, involved librarians—can have a discernible positive impact on student achievement *regardless of student, school and community demographics*.

The evidence is drawn from elementary, middle, and high school studies reaching back to the 1950s. While the volume of evidence alone is cumulatively persuasive, the most recent research is especially powerful because its authors statistically controlled for demographic differences among the schools they studied—a feature missing in the pre-1990 research. This is important because the evidence is largely derived from statistical correlation studies, which cannot unequivocally prove causation. Correlation research can, however, identify relationships and degrees of association among variables. Cause-and-effect probability is strengthened if similar correlations appear in multiple settings over time, which is what occurs here.

Most effectively illustrated in recent work by Lance and his associates in Colorado (Lance, 2001; Lance & Loertscher, 2001) and by Smith (2001) in Texas, the research identifies statistically significant positive correlations between (a) student achievement levels on various types of standardized measures and (b) library media services and school librarians displaying these eleven characteristics:

*Media Services Program Characteristics*

1. Large, varied, and up-to-date collections.
2. One or more full-time qualified librarians.
3. Library support staff large enough and skilled enough to free certificated librarians from routine clerical duties and to allow them time to teach, to collaborate with teachers, and to engage in leadership activities outside of the library.
4. Free student and teacher access to the library during and beyond school hours.
5. Networked computers providing student and faculty access to catalogs, licensed databases, and the Internet.
6. Budget adequate to support the previous five items.
7. Staff commitment to teaching.
8. Individual student library use well beyond scheduled class visitations.
9. Information literacy instruction integrated into the curriculum.

*Librarian Characteristics*

10. Extensively collaborates with teachers.
11. Extensively involved in curricular, organizational, and operational school leadership activities outside of the library.

Of particular interest is the recent evidence (Lance & Loertscher, 2001) that the positive effects of library media programs increase when the librarian's traditional role is expanded to include involvement well beyond the library. One great barrier to full library utilization is a lack of faculty awareness of what the library and librarian have to offer. Exposure to and experience working with effective school librarians is a first step in correcting that deficiency.

## Administrator Support

Role expansion allows librarians to deliver additional important services, such as research support for administrators. Freed from clerical duties and aware of developing challenges and opportunities through their extra-library involvement, librarians can draw on the Internet and subscription databases to supply principals with up-to-the-minute information on any given topic in planning sessions and prior to any board, faculty, parent, or business partner meeting. Consistent access to such information can only result in improved administrative decision-making.

Librarians also can support targeted faculty and student groups, including counselors (White & Wilson, 1997), beginning teachers (Barron, 1998), and at-risk (Bluemel & Taylor, 1991), latchkey (Feldman, 1990), and special needs youngsters (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

## How Can Principals Support Libraries?

Principals determine school library media program quality as much as librarians do (Haycock, 1999; Oberg, 1995; Oberg, Hay, & Henri, 2000) because they influence or control each of the eleven factors listed above. Collection size, currency, service hours, staff size, and the employment of full-time qualified librarians and adequate support staff all are tied to the principal's budgeting decisions.

As important as money is, however, it's not the only measure of support. Equally important is the principal's role in creating a school environment where student library use and faculty/librarian interaction are valued and promoted (Campbell & Cordiero, 1996; Wilson & Lyders, 2001). For example, the librarian's opportunity to collaborate with teachers depends on the school schedule, which the principal controls (McGregor, 2002; van Dusen & Tallman, 1994) and on how effectively principals encourage collaboration among faculty members. Teachers collaborate more with other teachers and with librarians when principals openly encourage the practice in word and deed (Haycock, 1999; Oberg, 1997; Pounder, 1998; Tallman & van Dusen, 1994a; Tallman & van Dusen, 1994b). How often students use the library similarly follows how well principals encourage faculty/librarian collaboration and their willingness to financially support services beyond regular school hours. As instructional and curriculum leaders, principals also powerfully affect the extent to which information literacy instruction is embedded in the body of the school's curriculum and how the school addresses meeting state standards in varying disciplines.

Perhaps nowhere is a principal's power to affect library media programs more apparent than in the extent to which the librarian has the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity outside the library itself. Principals structure and populate the committees, teams, and task forces that recommend and implement school policy and practice changes. Prin-



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

cipals decide who will have the opportunity to take part in boundary-spanning activities to interact with district-level committees, parent groups, business partners, and community organizations (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehie, & Hurwitz, 1984). An active and committed librarian may be eager to engage in these activities, but will not have the chance unless the principal wills it. This is a particularly important point because many principals do not perceive librarians as potential faculty leaders (Schon, Helmstadter, & Robinson, 1991).

The school library media elements that foster increased student achievement are interactive and their effects are cumulative. Even under optimum conditions, none is sufficient in itself. External leadership opportunities won't increase faculty interaction opportunities if the library is impoverished. The most extensive collection will not produce maximal achievement results unless qualified librarians and support staff are available to help students and teachers use it. Enrichment services to targeted groups and administrative research support cannot be delivered if librarians are saddled with clerical duties. Principal support must be broad-based and multi-dimensional.

Albert Einstein is reputed to have said that problems cannot be solved using the same thinking that created them. How then can principals best support their libraries?

- Educate themselves to library and librarian potential.
- Reconfigure the librarian's job to maximize realization of that potential.
- Hire high-quality, forward-looking, energetic, innovative librarians.
- Provide budget resources adequate to new roles and demands.
- Effectively and accurately evaluate both the program and the librarian on jointly developed criteria recognizing library media work as simultaneously integral to instructional quality but distinct from classroom teaching itself.

## Finding Assistance

Principals interested in developing their libraries as instruments of school improvement can ask their librarians to assemble a research collection to share with board members, district administration, and faculty. Ireland's (2001) regularly updated annotated bibliography of school library and academic achievement research is a useful starting point. Several ERIC digests (Lance, 2001; Lowe, 2000; Russell, 2000, for example) also point to original sources. A number of useful books (such as Lance & Loertscher, 2001; McQuillan, 1998; Wilson & Lyders, 2001) similarly identify and summarize research findings.

## References


Barron, D. (1998). In the beginning: Resources for school library media specialists helping new teachers. *School Library Media Activities Monthly, 15* (2), 46-50. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 577 807)

Bluemel, S., & Taylor, R. (1991). *Current status of Texas library media specialists' intervention with at-risk students.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the Texas Library Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 046)

Campbell, B. S., & Cordiero, P. A. (1996). *High school principal roles and implementation themes for mainstreaming information literacy instruction.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York City. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 399 667)

Feldman, S. (1990). *The library and the latchkey.* ERIC Digest. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 331 512)

Haycock, K. (1999). Fostering collaboration, leadership, and information literacy: Common behaviors of uncommon principals and faculties. *NASSP Bulletin, 83* (605), 82-87. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 585 580)

Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (2001). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Ireland, L. H. (2001). The impact of school library services on student academic achievement: An annotated bibliography (5th ed.). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 450 807)

Lance, K. C. (2001). *Proof of the power: Recent research on the impact of school library media programs on the academic achievement of U.S. public school students.* ERIC Digest. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 456 861). Available online: http://ericit.org/digests/EDO-IR-2001-05.pdf

Lance, K. C., & Loertscher, D. V. (2001). *Powering achievement: School library media programs make a difference – The evidence.* San Jose, CA: Hi Willow Research & Publishing.

Lowe, C. A. (2000). *The role of the school library media specialist in the 21st century.* ERIC Digest. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 446 769). Available online: http://ericit.org/digests/EDO-IR-2000-08.shtml

McGregor, J. (2002). Flexible scheduling: How does a principal facilitate implementation? *School Libraries Worldwide, 8* (1), 71-84.

McQuillan, J. (1998). *The literacy crisis.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Morris, V., Crowson, C., Porter-Gehrie, C., &Hurwitz, E. Jr. (1984). *Principals in action: The reality of managing schools.* Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Oberg, D. (1995). Principal support: What does it mean to teacher librarians? In *Sustaining the vision: Selected papers from the annual conference of the International Association of School Librarianship,* Worcester, England (pp. 17-25). Kalamazoo, MI: International Association of School Librarianship. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 400 834). Available online: http://www.slis.ualberta.ca/oberg_support.htm

Oberg, D. (1997). The principal's role in empowering collaboration between teacher-librarians and teachers: Research findings. *Scan, 16* (3), 6-8.

Oberg, D., Hay, L., & Henri, J. (2000). The role of the principal in an information literate school community: Cross-country comparisons from an international research project. *School Library Media Research,* Vol. 3. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 618 497). Available online at: http://www.ala.org/aasl/SLMR/vol3/principal2/principal2.html

Pounder, D. G. (Ed.) (1998). *Restructuring schools for collaboration: Promises and pitfalls.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Russell, S. (2000). *Teachers and librarians: Collaborative relationships.* ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 444 605). Available online: http://ericit.org/digests/EDO-IR-2000-06.shtml

Schon, I., Helmstadter, G. C., & Robinson, D. (1991). The role of school library media specialists. *School Library Media Quarterly, 19* (4), 228-233. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 433 168)

Smith, E. G. (2001). *Texas school libraries: Standards, resources, services, and students' performance.* Austin, TX: Texas State Library and Archives Commission. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 455 850). Available online: http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/pubs/schlibsurvey/index.html

Tallman, J. I., & van Dusen, J. D. (1994a). Collaborative unit planning--schedule, time and participants. *School Library Media Quarterly, 23* (1), 33-37. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service EJ 493 343)

Tallman, J. I., & van Dusen, J. D. (1994b). External conditions as they relate to curriculum consultation and information skills instruction by school library media specialists. *School Library Media Quarterly, 23* (1), 27-31. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 493 342)

van Dusen, J. D., & Tallman, J. I. (1994). The impact of scheduling on curriculum consultation and information skills instruction. *School Library Media Quarterly, 23* (1), 17-25. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 493 341)

Wesson, C., & Keefe, M. (Eds.) (1995). *Serving special needs students in the school library media center.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 385 999)

White, M., & Wilson, P. (1997). School counselors and teacher-librarians: A necessary partnership for effective schools. *Emergency Librarian, 25* (1), 8-13. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 552 633)

Wilson, P. J., & Blake, M. (1993). The missing piece: A school library media center component in principal-preparation programs. *Record in Educational Leadership, 12* (2), 65-68.

Wilson, P. P., & Lyders, J. A. (2001). *Leadership for today's school library: A handbook for the library media specialist and the school principal.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.


## The Author


**Gary Hartzell,** a former high school principal, is Professor of Educational Administration and Supervision at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. A keynote speaker at the White House Conference on School Libraries in June 2002 and a member of the Advisory Board for the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries, Professor Hartzell works to bring the school library to administrator's attention through numerous conference presentations, articles and books. He is the author of *Building Influence for the School Librarian* (Linworth, 1994) and two related books forthcoming in 2004 by Libraries Unlimited.



**ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.**



*This publication is funded in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0005. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. Visit the Department of Education's Web site at: www.ed.gov*

**U.S. Department of Education**
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

# NOTICE

## Reproduction Basis

| | |
|---|---|
| | This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form. |
| X | This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket"). |